Over the Canadian Battlefields

J. W. Dafoe

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OVER THE CANADIAN BATTLEFIELDS

A Landmark of the Canadian Battlefields

These ruined towers of the Church and Monastery of Mont St. Eloi—relics of the revolutionary wars of France—overlook the Battlefields of Vimy Ridge and Arras, and were a familiar landmark to tens of thousands of Canadian soldiers during the war.

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Over the Canadian Battlefields

Notes of a Little Journey in France, in March, 1919

By
JOHN W. DAFOE

THOMAS ALLEN
TORONTO

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TO

GENERAL SIR ARTHUR CURRIE, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.,

THE CIVILIAN COMMANDER OF THE

CONQUERING CANADIAN CIVILIAN ARMY

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AUTHORS FOREWORD

THE articles which go to make up this little book were written for newspaper publication immediately following the journey over the battlefields, in France in March, 1919, which I had been enabled to make, through the courtesy and kindness of the Canadian Corps Commander. They were published in April, 1919, in the Manitoba *Free Press,* Winnipeg; and are now republished at the request of many friends who have asked that they be made available in more permanent form.

Though the articles reveal their journalistic origin alike in their form and in a certain evanescent timeliness, already partly out of date it has not been considered advisable, under the circumstances, to re-cast them into more permanent form. They are re-published as written save for some slight textual corrections.

J.W.D.

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OVER THE CANADIAN BATTLEFIELDS

CHAPTER I

A HURRIED PILGRIMAGE

IN the first days of March, 1919, I made hurriedly a pilgrimage that will be made in more leisurely manner by thousands of Canadians in coming years. For while the memory of the Great War endures and Canada retains her national consciousness, Canadians, generation after generation for centuries to come, will follow the Canadian way of glory over the battlefields of France and Flanders, with reverent hearts and shining eyes, learning anew the story of what will doubtless always remain the most romantic page in our national history. For lack of time I had to forego my visit to the bitter battlefields of Flanders: Ypres, where the Canadians held the line against all odds when German hopes for the Channel ports appeared for the moment to be on

the point of fulfilment; Festubert, St. Eloi and Sanctuary Wood, the scenes of desperate encounters where the Canadians learned hard lessons in the art of beating the Boche; and Passchendaele, where the very doubtful and questionable Flanders campaign of 1917 had a victorious finale by the resounding achievement of the Canadian corps in capturing the ridge which had so long defied assault. But the other Canadian battlefronts I saw, albeit hurriedly and under weather conditions which were far from propitious; and perhaps some notes of my impressions may not be entirely lacking in interest to the Canadian public.

But before going on to this something might be said on the general subject of visits to the Canadian battlefields of the Western European front. At the moment of course this area is sealed to visitors. It constitutes a military zone which can only be entered under the authority of a "white pass." Unless one is accompanied by a

member of the military staff he cannot get this pass nor would it be of use to him because there is in this belt of wilderness which lies athwart one of the oldest and most populous areas in Europe no means of transportation and no accommodation for the unattached civilian. But this of course is a condition that will speedily pass.

In a year's time, or less, the tides of travel will pour over these highways; and among the travellers will be all sorts and conditions of men; from the idle sightseers seeking a new sensation amidst these mute memorials of human conflict to the reverent pilgrim following step by step the road of sacrifice and glory trodden by his countrymen in the Great Crusade.

It is desirable that for Canadians making this pilgrimage there should be, so to speak, a beaten path which they can follow with the certainty that, with a minimum of time, they can bring away with them something approaching adequate understanding

of Canada's contribution to the great European campaigns. There is a proposition, not without strong support in army circles, that Canada should erect and maintain in perpetuity a number of battle shrines which would be stations on this pilgrimage. The suggested sites are Ypres, Vimy Ridge, Bourlon Wood and some point in the district of Amiens, either in Courcelette or further south, in the track of the Canadian avalanche of August 8, 1918. These shrines, it is proposed, should contain plans of the adjoining battle-fields in topographical relief, maps, diagrams, detailed histories of the actions, information as to the Canadian cemeteries in the neighborhood—they should be the headquarters for all that a Canadian, ten, twenty or fifty years hence, will want to know. If this plan is carried out there should also be available official Canadian guides fully equipped to tell the story of Canadian achievement.

The project is one well worth careful con-

sideration. Canada's participation in the war is a fountain from which succeeding generations should drink deep, learning thereby lessons in valor, sacrifice, patriotism and national pride; and nothing will make this living inspiration more available than maintaining in perpetuity upon the European battle-fields authentic records of the deeds done there. It is a reasonable expectation that once normal conditions of life are resumed thousands of Canadians will yearly make the tour of the Canadian fronts—visiting in turn the Flanders battle-fields; the scenes of the heroic achievements around Vimy and Lens; that portion of the tragic field of the Somme "which is forever Canada" by virtue of our dead; and finally following step by step the Canadian advance during the One Hundred Days, which saw Germany's military effort pass, by successive disasters, from the high tide of the July offensive to the hopeless ruin of the November surrender. Even a casual in-

spection will take several days for, during their 42 months of war, the Canadian troops ranged wide and shed the glamor of their achievements upon many localities. The names of these places, many of them already storied from battles long ago, make a list full of significance to the Canadians of today and tomorrow. Langemarck, St. Julien, Festubert, St. Eloi, Sanctuary Wood, Courcelette, Regina Trench, Vimy, Hill Seventy, Passchendaele, Amiens, Arras, Monchy-le-Preux, Bourlon Wood, Cambrai, Valenciennes, Mons.

In my three days flying trip in a motor out from Paris and back again I covered in some sort the more southern fields of Canadian operations. We struck into the battle-fronts from the west having gone north from Paris by the traditional road to England—out St. Denis Gate and north through Beauvais, crossing the Somme at Abbeville and then turning eastward towards Arras. At St. Pol, which was the extreme limit of

the range of a high powered German naval gun, the first signs of shell fire were seen. Thereafter mile by mile, as we sped through a countryside familiar to Canadian troops as a rest area, the evidences of war damage increased until we ran into the battlefields of the Souchez and saw the slope of Vimy rise gently to the sky-line. From there our course ran over the Ridge to that huge pile of red-brick rubble that was Lens—once a city of 50,000 souls; thence on through Douai and Denain to Valenciennes. This was the way of the German retreat; at every crossroads hasty repairs to the paved way bore witness to their scheme of systematic destruction; over every canal and stream the road was carried on improvised bridges, the original structures sprawling in ruined heaps athwart the waterways. From Valenciennes—relatively damaged but slightly—we ran into Cambrai, the latter half of the road through villages that bore ample marks of the rear-guard actions between

the Germans and the onward-pressing Canadians. From Cambrai—a shell of a city systematically destroyed by fire by the Germans as they fell back—the road to Arras took us through the centre of the great battlefield over which the Canadians drove the Huns in the fighting of late August and September—to the left a huge blur on the sky-line seen through the driving rain was Bourlon Wood; to the right the ruins of the villages where the desperate German counter-attacks at the end of September were stopped; further on, three huge streaks of blackened wire stretching across the gaunt countryside marked the once-vaunted impregnable Hindenburg line; then to the right rose the high ground of Monchy-le-Preux, wrested out of hand from the Germans by the Third Division in the early hours of a bloody August day; all about, on both sides of the road as far as the eye could see stretched the tortured and scarred countryside over which the tide of carnage flowed and ebbed for two years;

and so to Arras—a ghost city where the shattered houses, no longer habitable, stand in their empty loneliness. From Arras we went to Bapaume by a road which crossed diagonally the old German-British front line; from Bapaume to Albert, across the waste of the Somme battlefield; on to Amiens in which the tides of business are again feebly flowing; along the highway to Roye, with the great Canadian battlefield of August stretching along the left for ten miles—a road memorable, too, to Canadians because along every mile of it Canadian cavalry and motor machine-gun men fought against the German flood in March 1918; in every copse hereabouts there lie Canadian dead. From Roye southward to the Oise we passed through a countryside which was fought over, foot by foot twice last year—to say nothing of the battles of earlier campaigns; everywhere there were ruin, desolation and the marks of death. After crossing the river the ruins of war diminished,

but not until we passed Senlis—where the marks of the beast left by the Hun high tide in 1914 are still to be seen—did we leave them behind; and so came back to Paris by the old Roman road over which the legions marched to Flanders nearly 2,000 years ago.

CHAPTER II

THE BATTLEGROUNDS OF THE SOUCHEZ

THE storming of Vimy Ridge on that wintry April morning two years ago was neither in its actual achievement nor in its military consequences the greatest feat of the Canadian Expeditionary Force; but it holds, and it may continue to hold, a unique place in the Canadian consciousness. It was the first cleancut definite stroke by the Canadian Corps acting as a recognized unit of the greater British army; and there was in the achievement something dramatic and climacteric which riveted the attention of all watchers of the long-continuing duel between the great armies along the western front. For Vimy, before it had any Canadian associations, was a tragic name! It was the western-most bastion of German

power in Europe. Against its gently rising slopes the fierce French valor that had conquered the valley of the Souchez and its bordering uplands, had dashed itself in vain; the hillside was white with the unburied bones of the men who won the ridge in October, 1915, for a day, only to be swept back by a German counter-attack of overwhelming force. The Germans proudly boasted the impregnability of a position which protected their strangle-hold upon the coalfields of Lens and gave them a jumping-off place for a further adventure westward to the Channel ports. When the greater portion of the Ridge was stormed in a fierce sustained assault by the Canadian troops on the morning of April 9, 1917, the reverberation of the achievement went round the world; and its echoes will long persist.

Vimy Ridge—a swell of land five miles in length which rises so gradually on the southern slopes that one hardly realizes the

elevation until he stands upon the crest and notes how the ground falls sheer away to the eastward—marks the eastern rim of one of the bloodiest battlegrounds of the whole war. Many Canadians have but the haziest knowledge of the battles that were fought hereabouts in the early summer of 1915; but the flower of the highly trained armies with which France and Germany entered the war lie buried here.

When, after the German defeat on the Marne in September, 1914, and the check to the Allies on the Aisne, the race to the northern sea began with the Germans keeping a step in advance and thus blocking the constant French attempt to outflank them from the west, all the high ground in this region was occupied by the Germans; and when the fronts became rigid the French found themselves in a dangerously insecure position with the German possession of the high hill of Notre Dame de Lorette threatening all the coal fields of northern France

and the southern shore of the Channel. During the winter of 1914-15 the French organized their attack, and in the early summer they set themselves doggedly to the task of turning the Germans out of these strong places. The enemy held the towering hill of Notre Dame and the cluster of houses known as Ablain St. Nazaire at its foot; across the little Souchez river the village of Carency on a slight eminence; a mile or so to the south the hamlet of Neuville St. Vaast, on the crest of a swell in the ground; southward from the latter point and stretching eastward almost to the base of Vimy Ridge they had prepared a huge network and maze of trenches and redoubts which acquired a sinister renown under the name of the Labyrinth.

For weeks during the summer of 1915 the battle raged here continuously; and literally the French drove the Germans foot by foot and yard by yard from these positions; out of Carency and down the Souchez valley;

back step by step from the heights of Notre Dame; trench by trench the Labyrinth was wrested from them; and by the late summer the Germans had withdrawn behind the great ridge of Vimy which lay athwart the path of the advancing French. There they stood savagely at bay, and when the French, in unison with the British attack at Loos, north of Lens, essayed in October to storm the hill, they exacted a bloody revenge for their earlier defeats. Afterwards this area became part of the British front, when the French moved to the south bank of the Somme; and after a year of inactivity, varied by a single unsuccessful attack upon a portion of the ridge's defences by a British brigade, the Canadians, in the winter of 1916-17, took over this sector and set themselves the task of taking the Ridge as their initial contribution to the great spring offensive that was foreshadowed.

I stood almost in the centre of this huge battlefield in the closing hours of a sombre

March day; a light mist was shrouding the crests of the uplands; in the valleys the darkness of night was already falling; for fleeting moments the dying sun, through a breach in the cloud battlements, threw gleams of wintry sunshine over the scene. Nearby were the abandoned ruins of what was once the hamlet of Carency. To the right Vimy Ridge rose slowly to the sky line, flaring up at its northern end into the steeper slopes of "the Pimple." Next came a narrow valley; and then the ridge resumed, turning now almost due west and rising to the height of Notre Dame de Lorette that dominated the landscape. At the base of the sloping terraces that came down from the hill-top the little river Souchez ran, turning north-easterly through the gorge and onward towards Lens. This little stream has known its current dammed by the wedged bodies of dead men; its banks have brimmed with human blood. Beyond the stream at the foot of the hill

were the ruins of Ablain St. Nazaire; and nearby all that remained of the sugar factory about which raged an Homeric struggle, noted in the battle bulletins of those days. Up those slopes, now so still in the fading daylight, the French pushed their way day by day and week by week until they planted their flag on its crest. To the south and east they fought their way over Neuville St. Vaast and through the tangled mazes of the Labyrinth. Within a radius of three miles from the place upon which we stood, over one hundred thousand French soldiers who fell in six months' fighting in 1915 lie buried. These incredible figures were vouched for by an officer of high rank.

When the Canadians moved into this area in the winter of 1916-17 they made their homes amidst the wreckage of these battlefields. They took over the trenches along the lower slopes of Vimy Ridge which were reachable only by communica-

tion trenches and sunken roads over open ground in plain view in daylight of the Germans who held the crest of the ridge and its western slopes half-way down. Behind this active front they built their secondary positions on the battlegrounds of 1915. Thus the First Division was encamped upon the ground of the Labyrinth; the divisional headquarters were in a German dug-out thirty-nine steps downward from the surface. The reshifting of trenches and dug-outs in this neighborhood was not, the Canadians found, to be lightly attempted; for the place was one huge—if unmarked—cemetery where French and Germans by the thousand had been buried where they fell.

Over this area for a distance of miles the Canadian corps had planted its camps as the line moved forward in front. Along the roads which cross in all directions one could read the sign-posts of the regiments pointing the way to collections of Nissen

huts and smaller wooden structures. Here, too, were defensive trenches and strong redoubts prepared for the reception of the enemy in the event of a German advance. One could easily imagine how busy this scene had been in the summer and autumn of 1917 when the Canadian corps were encamped hereabouts. But on the March evening when I saw it, it was bleak and cheerless beyond the power of words to express. The tide of war had flowed past and left the wrecked countryside vacant—the huts empty and the camps abandoned save for, here and there, a handful of men engaged in salvage work; the roadways, once swarming with life, deserted and silent! Over all desolation and loneliness rested like a pall; everywhere the wreckage of battle, the debris of destruction; everywhere the sense of man's mortality! A grim and melancholy expanse; yet withal holy ground, for here men by the tens of thousands died for mankind!

CHAPTER III

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

WHEREVER in our flying trip we touched the border line between the actual battlefields and the secondary districts of the war—as for instance Amiens and Valenciennes—we saw human life finding its way into normal channels; but over the areas of continued and desperate fighting there was still the abomination of desolation. Here in the very centre of an ancient populous civilization there stretches for miles in every direction a wilderness—not the empty loneliness of a new land awaiting the inflowing of human life, but a man-made desert speaking of the ruthless savagery of man in the sway of his passions. Here there are ruined farmsteads, vanished villages once fair forests shredded into pulp,

huge piles of debris marking the site of storied cities, destroyed temples—and hardly a sign of human life except the last dribbles of the great tide of uniformed men that once poured over these highways. Thus an afternoon drive from Arras to Cambrai was through a profound silence. Here was a wide highway running straight between two famous French cities through the heart of an ancient land. In the whole distance we met only two or three military cars engaged in the aftermath of war; and a few small working parties of "Chinks" thousands of miles from their native Manchuria.

Standing on the motor's seat, one looked north and south, east and west to the skyline. Everywhere silence, profound, brooding, fateful! Not a curling smoke-wreath on the horizon bespoke a human habitation. The country is open, rolling upland—in its physical conformation it seemed to me almost the counterpart of southern central Manitoba as it was 30-odd years ago before

the industry of man dotted it with thriving farmsteads.

The acme of destruction is to be witnessed at Lens. This was the work of the Canadian artillery. In October, 1915 campaign the British drove for Hill Seventy, north of Lens, and the French for Vimy Ridge, both fruitlessly, despite initial success. It was assumed in all the "expert" military writing of that date that the possession by the Allies of these two hills would force the evacuation of the Lens coalfields by the Germans. The Canadians took Vimy Ridge in April, 1917; they pushed down the reverse side of the ridge and across the level ground to the outskirts of Lens within the next three months; in August they stormed Hill Seventy by one of the most brilliant minor operations of the war. But the Hun, contrary to the forecasts of the strategists, refused to quit Lens. It was half ringed by the Canadians, who kept it drowned in poison gas and buried under a constant rain of artillery

projectiles; but the Germans, hidden in the rabbit warrens with which they honeycombed the foundations of the city, held on, and to every attempt to take possession of the ruined town they opposed a desperate and successful resistance. The Canadian plans included the storming in October, 1917, of Salumines Hill to the south-east of the city. Had this been done—and no Canadian staff officer had any doubt of the practicability of the enterprise—the Germans in Lens would have been trapped like rats; but the demands of the higher strategy intervened and the Canadians were shifted to the mud of Flanders, where they achieved the brilliant but fruitless distinction of taking Passchendaele ridge.

So the Germans stayed on in Lens, and the Canadians, when they returned to their sector, resumed their daily occupation of spraying them with gas and pounding them with shell—with the result that when the line gave further south and the Germans

had to fall back, the Allied armies entered Lens to find it the completest expression of the destructive possibilities of artillery fire that was supplied by any theatre of war. In this city, which once housed 50,000 people, not a single house remains—it is one huge red mass of red brick rubble through which roadways have been painfully excavated by labor battalions. Yet a few of the original inhabitants have crept back and can be seen standing in little disconsolate groups around the dust heaps which were their homes—living meanwhile in the German dugouts under the town. As I drove through the town on a blustering March morning, there still lingered in the air, four months after the firing of the last shot, the faint smell of human mortality. For in these huge rubbish heaps, if they are ever cleared away, will be found hundreds of Germans buried by the shells that destroyed them.

One hears controversy amongst the experts as to whether Lens or Arras is the

most affecting illustration of what war does to organized human society. There is much to be said for both sides of the argument. In Lens ruin is so complete as to almost blur the sense of human association; but Arras is the pitiful spectacle of a huge collection of uninhabitable houses — domestic shrines from which the fire has gone cold and can never be revived. There they stood gaunt, tottering and cheerless—windows out, doors hanging awry, gaping holes in the walls, the roofs fallen in, the broken and sagging floors and all the pitiful and touching relics of destroyed domestic life, pictures still hanging on the walls, broken furniture, torn and destroyed clothing. The Grande Place of Arras—a succession of attractive buildings in the Spanish style all built to a plan, with a wide colonnaded walk beneath them around the square—is a dreadful, heart-rending ruin. An occasional building in Arras affords shelter to returning refugees; and there is here a considerable and increas-

ing population. In one narrow street a number of shops have reopened and make as brave a showing as is possible among the ruins.

Lens and Arras are the ruins of war—the by-product of great powers in a death-grip. But Cambrai is a ruin of another sort. It is a monument to the malignant spirit of the Hun in defeat. As the British and the Canadians closed in from the south and the north they spared the city which they knew was fated to fall to them; no shell fell in its borders save by inadvertence. But this did not avail to save this ancient famous town. The Canadians entered it to find it deserted, all the civilian population having been carried off, and on fire from a hundred conflagrations systematically set with the aid of inflammable bombs, petrol and firewood; and while the Germans fell back towards their own land a pillar of smoke from the burning city bespoke their rage at being robbed of their prey. Cambrai is the

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burned-out shell of a town—a mere wraith of its former charms. All these cities—and to them may be added, St. Quentin, Albert, Ypres, and a hundred smaller places—will have to be rebuilt from the foundations upward; but first they will have to be demolished stone by stone and the rubbish carried away—a huge task which is not yet begun, awaiting perhaps the reparation money which will be of right the first after-the-war charge against the resources of Germany.

In the track of the war machine there was no sign as we passed of any attempt to repair the ravages of four campaigns—it will take no trifling outlay in money, labor and ingenuity, for instance, to turn the battlefield of the Somme into a habitable countryside; it is now "mere land desperate and done with," like "the ominous tract" through which Childe Roland rode to his fate. But on the borders of the actual battlefields work was going forward to prepare

the ground for the coming crop. Between Lens and Douai the Germans had scarred the country with a series of defensive positions; and gangs of German military prisoners were busily engaged, under the watchful eye of overseers, in refilling the deep trenches and smoothing the fields. That was a sight often repeated as we passed from the battle wilderness to the less damaged belt about it; and there was about it a touch of satisfying ironic fitness! For these trenches were built by forced French labor of old men, women and children under German taskmasters. For the first ten or fifteen miles out of Amiens along the road to Roye—the scene of a sharp battle in the open which did relatively little damage to the country—many gangs of German prisoners were at work with their spades; while the French farmers were busily turning furrows in the fields upon which armies met in furious conflict last August. Here and there a small tractor could be seen at work.

Almost invariably as the motor went by the German prisoners stopped their work and with wistful eyes watched it pass down the road to the outside world of freedom. It was not difficult to read the thoughts in the minds of these men, most of them young and many of them not unintelligent in looks. This was the end of their dream of world domination, their reward for their surrender of life and thought to the homicidal maniac who reigned at Potsdam and now hides in fear and trembling from the wrath of the world in an obscure retreat in Holland.

CHAPTER IV

THE MARKS OF WAR

A BRITISH general who fought through the whole war recently observed in the British House of Commons, of which he is now a member, that "war is a most disgusting, barbarous and preposterous state of affairs." One feels how true this is as he passes through the war area with its all-too-clear record of death, loss, famine and incalculable human suffering when he is not under the control of boundless admiration for the valor, sacrifice, tenacity, endurance and ingenuity evoked by this war in men who five years ago seemed ordinary men and will tomorrow be again plain citizens. One swings between the two emotions as he travels in the wake of War and takes note of the sign-manuals

which it has left everywhere along the way.

It seems incredible that life should have been at all possible along the front as one goes over these battlefields and takes note of conditions. The trenches have partly fallen in; but it takes little imagination to recreate the scene. Here are the abominable mud ditches which were dignified by the name of trenches, the funk-holes in the mud walls, the dug-outs, the long winding and partly sunken roads of approach, the slightly more commodious trenches in reserve and the camps behind. Judged by any accepted standard of living in 1913—or 1923—one would say that a Hottentot or an Australian bushman, indurated to living under the most primitive conditions, would find life intolerable here in a fortnight's time apart altogether from any question of danger from external causes. That gently-nurtured men from homes, where loving mothers or assiduous wives made the mustard plaster or the hot-water bottle the sure sequel for an inad-

vertent wetting, should have "toughed" it here for months and years under all the variegated brands of European weather, including that damnable combination of rain, fog, damp and chill which they call winter in those parts, under the always imminent possibility of sudden and terrible death without becoming brutalized is a heartening proof of the greatness of the human soul and its power over the influences that make for baseness. It was not incredible to me that Canadian men should have stormed Vimy Ridge, breaking through the elaborate German defences as though they were made of pack-thread; what was incredible was that they had lived under conditions of constant danger and never-relaxing strain in burrows along the foot of the hill for months before the attack, with their food and supplies brought in precariously at night over level fields completely dominated by the German guns on the top of the hill. It was the high faith that failed

not by the way even more than the iron valor that prevailed in the hour of battle that reveals most surely the heroic qualities of our soldiers in the field. Some few miles of the original battlefields showing the opposing fronts, the original trenches, the deep pock-marks of the shell holes, no man's lands with its markings of secret, nightly warfare should be kept intact in order that posterity may appreciate in some little measure what life in the front line meant in the Great War.

Everywhere as one goes through the battle area, there can be seen one ever-recurring mark of battle that will endure—the graves of those who fell. The war area is in truth one vast cemetery. Look almost where one will from the road and he will see, here and there, the white cross, or clusters of them, showing where soldiers were buried where they fell. (A stick driven in the ground with a helmet on the top of it—there are almost forests of these along the Cambrai

road—marks the grave of a German soldier). There was never a war where so much care was taken to keep a record of the resting place of fallen soldiers; and as time passes bodies will be taken from their isolated graves on the battlefields and placed in great military cemeteries where they will receive in perpetuity the care of a reverent posterity. In the main the unplaced dead will be those who fell in territory which, as the result of the action, passed into enemy hands for the time being. Everywhere along the roadways there are small Canadian graveyards, many of which will doubtless remain undisturbed for all time. Thus no one will ever propose to disturb the slumbers of the seventy or eighty Canadians—among them Lance-Corporal Sifton, V.C.—who rest in a huge mine crater on Vimy Ridge. The crater has been rounded and smoothed; a huge cross outlined on the earth at the bottom of the hole marks the common grave; and at the rim of the crater,

visible from the roadside, is a modest, temporary memorial bearing the names of the fallen.

As we crossed the battlefields of Courcelette by the Bapaume-Albert highway Canadian soldiers in numbers appeared by the roadside. Upon inquiry we learned that nearly 400 Canadians, representing most branches of the service, were engaged in collecting the Canadian dead of the Somme battlefields into one large cemetery which will be maintained by the Canadian authorities. Further along the road towards Albert we came to two wayside cemeteries. One to the right showed a profusion of white crosses arranged not in orderly rows but in little groups, showing that the soldiers whose graves were thus marked had been buried where they fell. This marked the resting place of the Tyneside-Scottish battalion which was wiped out in the attack upon La Boisselle on July 1, 1916—the opening day of the Somme battle. The other grave-

yard, on the other side of the road further on, was in neat and perfect order behind a trim railing. Here there are Canadians, British, South African and Australian graves—the Canadians predominating although the striking large cross which marks the cemetery is erected to the memory of the Australian Expeditionary Force. The place made such an appeal that we stopped for a closer inspection. As I stepped through the gate into the trim enclosure the first name I saw was that of an old personal friend and fellow-craftsman—brave, gentle, kindly, generous John Lewis, editor of the *Montreal Star,* who fell in October, 1916. Lewis, American-born but Canadian by adoption and by the great sacrifice, sleeps between two young Canadians—to the left the young son of the Bishop of Quebec, to the right Lieutenant Outerson, of the Winnipeg Grenadiers. Among the other graves here is that of Lieutenant H. H. Scott, of Quebec, whose body was retrieved from the

battlefield by his own father, Canon Frederick George Scott—churchman, poet and hero—and by him buried in this God's acre where dust of the British race from the uttermost parts of the earth and the isles of the sea slumbers in the "rest after stormie seas," bespoken by the poet as a high measure of human felicity.

These notes on the mementoes which war has left in its train may be perhaps closed by one more cheerful and hopeful in character. This was a scene on the Roye-Amiens highway midway between these towns; not in itself unique for we saw it repeated elsewhere in what might be called the sub-area of war. It had within it the promise of a future that will, so far as this is now possible, repair the past. We had just passed the "front" as it was during the summer of 1916. First come two shallow French trenches not strongly guarded by wire entanglements; then 500 yards of no-man's-land; then the formidable German defences

—three offensive lines of entrenchments heavily wired; and after a short interval two further lines equally strong. It must be admitted that the Germans were watchful and industrious. The wire, weather-beaten by exposure, stretched across the countryside like wide black ribands.

As we passed into the relatively unharmed country beyond we saw, standing by the roadside, a one-horse wagon piled high with simple household necessities—bedding, furniture and food. Around it was a family group, with actually shining, smiling faces —a rarity this, these days, in the once gay land of France. There were the middle-aged father and mother, a young man in war-worn uniform, safely home from the wars, a fair young girl of perhaps seventeen and a younger girl. They were busily engaged in unloading the wagon and carrying their household goods—where? No building was anywhere in sight—nothing but the inevitable pile of rubbish by the

roadway. But on a closer look we saw that the cellar of the house that had once stood there had been fitted over with a rude temporary roof and to this refuge this reunited family, after the hardships and perils of the war, had come home with a joy and thanksgiving that shone in their eyes. This was Home!

Thus the human heart, unconquerable by adversity, resolutely sets about repairing the ravages of time and war! Man rebuilds his ruined home, sets up again the family altars, renews the sweet amenities of life, retills the fields. The soldier, husbandman once more, turns the brown furrow—"God-like making provision for mankind"—and sees the cheerful smoke from his household fires mark the citadel of his happiness, the shrine of his desires! Behind lies the wreckage, the pain, the terrors of those impossible, those unimaginable years of war—ahead stretches the future of clean and fruitful work, the dear rewards of love and affection, the

blessings of a healing and fruitful Peace, never to be broken again—else these millions have died in vain—by the trumpets of the Lords of War!

CHAPTER V

THE CANADIAN HAMMER STROKES

THE epic of the Canadian achievement in the last hundred days of the Great War must be written if there is in Canada a man capable of writing it. It must be accurate in its technique; but no technical accuracy will suffice to tell the story. There must be told not only the record of the actual achievements, but their relationship to the wider strategy of the war. Their impact upon the final issue of this superhuman struggle must be interpreted, that the Canadians of to-day and their posterity forever may know what contribution Canada made to the freeing of the world from the menace of Prussianism. All Canadians know that in August the Canadian corps made an unexampled advance near Amiens

in the great offensive on the British front; that nearly a month later they smashed their way through the "impregnable" Drocourt-Queant line; that by a brilliant tactical stroke they crossed the Canal du Nord and captured Bourlon Wood; that they outflanked Cambrai from the north compelling its evacuation; that they wrested Valenciennes from the enemy by a concentric movement from the north and south; that, assisted at times by two British divisions, they, four divisions strong, met and defeated during the three months 47 German divisions with immense captures of men, guns and supplies.

These, considered by themselves, were great feats worthy of commemoration but it is only when they are viewed in their relation to the great struggle that raged from the Alps to the sea that their full significance and value are revealed. These achievements were a series of successive hammerstrokes upon the whole western

German position; and more than any other related series of military operations they contributed to the collapse, at a date far earlier than the most hopeful had dared to fix, of that huge fortress which for four years had defied the genius, the resourcefulness and the valor of the Allied western powers. This is the plain, simple truth; and it is the business of Canada to see that in the final telling of the last phases of the war this fact—of such immense bearing upon our future national development and our status in the world—is not allowed to be obscured.

The Canadian corps came into the final campaign with certain very evident advantages which stood them in good stead. They had suffered no losses—apart from the cavalry and machine-gun sections—in the terrible battles of March and April when the German drives down the valley of the Somme and through Flanders towards the sea were stopped just before they culmin-

ated in allied disaster. This does not mean that during this anxious period the Canadian corps, as some seem to think, enjoyed a luxurious and reposeful existence removed from the perils and anxieties of war. When the German offensive began the Canadians were holding a front along Vimy Ridge of 9,000 yards; when it ended they were in charge of 35,000 yards of front line trenches. They did no fighting because the Germans did not attack them; had they done so they would have got a warm reception. During this anxious period the Canadians deepened their defensive position by five miles—in the rear of Vimy Ridge the new trenches then dug can be seen on every side; they reorganized their machine-gun detachments, increasing their fighting power by fifty per cent.; and they had organized every Canadian in the area down to the cooks into fighting bodies—all inspired by a common determination to resist until the death. In those dark days, they served by standing and waiting!

Nevertheless they profited, of course, by their happy escape at that time from the fearful sacrifice which other British divisions on the western front had to make. When the time came to take their place in the line for the great—and as it developed —the decisive offensive, they were in splendid condition — divisions over-strength, thoroughly equipped, hardened by an iron discipline cheerfully borne and uplifted by a consciousness that the days of inaction were over and that their hour had struck.

As the Canadian troops moved south from their long-held positions at Vimy to take their place in the line of battle at Amiens one phenomenon—which was rightly interpreted as a portent of victory—was noted. The troops began again spontaneously to sing as they covered the miles along the straight undeviating French roads which are heartbreaking to infantry on the march. In the early days the Canadian was a singing army; but as the iron of war entered its

soul it fell silent and the long marches to the battlefields were made in dogged silence. But in those bright days in early August serene confidence in their power to conquer filled the hearts of the Canadian soldiers; and their cheerful and confident voices filled the air with Canadian songs. From then to the end the Canadians sang as they fought their way from victory to victory.

The participation by the Canadian corps in the battle of Amiens was a well-kept secret until they went over the top. The Germans were misled by a calculated manoeuvre into believing that the Canadians had been moved north into Flanders; the French lining up for their drive forward south of the Roye road did not know until the eve of the battle that the troops immediately to their left across the highway, which were to move forward with them, were the Canadians. The news was not unwelcome to them; for the reputation of

the Canadians as shock troops of the first order was already established. The road runs through the large semi-open wood where the whole Canadian army remained hidden during August 7th; with the falling of darkness they moved forward in the charge of guides to their appointed posts—the ground being quite unfamiliar to them. The plan of battle called for the advance at zero hour by the Canadians between the Amiens-Roye road and the Amiens-Ham railway, an initial front of 7,000 yards; on the left beyond the railway were the Australians and on the right across the road were the French. The dividing line of the highway was not rigidly observed. The 9th brigade, forming the extreme right of the Canadian force, delivered its attack from the right of the road and captured Rifle Wood—a daring and successful stroke well worth the telling which had much to do with the almost instantaneous success all along the line of the Canadian advance, and

further along the road on the following day the Canadians stormed across the road in support of the French and taking the Germans on the flank and in reverse made possible a break through at one of the most obstinately defended points of the enemy front.

This was the first occasion upon which the Canadians met the enemy in open fighting; and the German expectation that troops experienced only in trench fighting would be at their mercy in field manoeuvres developed at once into a catastrophic disappointment. Of all the battlefields of the war the terrain here shows the least signs of conflict —due to the rapid retirement of the Germans once their front lines were smashed. From the highway most of the battlefield can be seen; and the story of the extraordinary advance of the Canadians by which a huge wedge was driven into the German front can be easily told by a competent guide—of which there never should be any

lack. No Canadian making a pious pilgrimage over the Canadian front should overlook the Amiens battlefield. An eminent military authority has made the prediction that in the ultimate judgment of the historian of the tactical developments of the 1918 campaign, the complete smashing of the German defence at this point by the Canadian corps in the early hours of August 8, will be regarded as one of the decisive turning points of the campaign. It is worth noting, in this connection, that Berlin despatches, quoting from advance proofs of his book on the war, credit Ludendorff with the statement that the success of the Franco-British offensive at Amiens on August 8th destroyed the last hope of the Germans for final victory.[1] The Canadians were the spear-head of that attack and made the deepest advance, on the opening day of the offensive, into the enemy's territory.

Within ten days the Canadian contribution to the Allied offensive in the Amiens

sector was completed. On August 22, the decision was reached by the high command to shift the whole Canadian force north to Arras in preparation for the attack upon the Drocourt-Queant position; in the early hours of August 26—less than 100 hours later—the Canadians burst through the early morning mist upon the astonished Germans, who thought them fifty miles away, and wrested the high ground at Monchy le Preux and the positions in alignment with it from them. From this jumping-off place the Canadians advanced resolutely and steadily towards Cambrai; in a week's time the much vaunted Hindenburg line was behind them; towards the end of September, upon the very morning upon which the Germans planned the recovery of lost ground the Canadians forestalled them, pushed across the Canal du Nord and enveloped Bourlon Wood where the British advance a year earlier had been stayed; then driving forward across the Arras-Cam-

brai highway they put in jeopardy the German control of Cambrai, the pivot upon which the whole western German defence swung. There followed the desperate attempt by the Germans to save Cambrai by the recapture of Bourlon Wood; their failure involved the evacuation of the city and the undermining of the defensive lines to the south. At Cambrai the Canadians passed the crest of the hill—thereafter the "going" was rapid and comparatively easy to a goal already in sight. The capture of Valenciennes was an interesting incident in a widespread advance by the whole Allied front from the Meuse to the sea; and the last day of the war found the Canadians as the advance guard of the British forces victoriously encamped upon the very ground where in August, 1914, the Old Contemptibles—that immortal vanished army—first threw the British sword into the rapidly-rising scale in a determination, amply vindicated by legions animated by their

example and inspired by their achievements who followed them, to right the balance. This completion of the full circle of British sacrifice in the last hours of the war by the troops of an overseas Dominion which, when the first shots were fired, had no military history and dreamed not of its aptitude for war is one of those profound historic coincidences which make an appeal, to be felt rather than expressed, to that sense of Destiny which in times of Fate takes possession of the human soul.

CHAPTER VI

THE CIVILIAN AS WARRIOR

NOT the least astonishing of the many surprises of the war to the Germans was the, to them, incredible capacity for swift preparation for war which was shown by the democratic and unmartial British nations under the spur of deep national feeling plus driving necessity. In their careful preparation for sudden war and overwhelming victory they had believed with reason, judging by all that the past could teach, that their margin of advantage, because of their mighty armies and the vast numbers of their trained officers, could never be overcome by those nations which in time of peace had failed to educate their people into a psychological readiness for the mass war and to equip

them to wage it. They remembered how vain had been the rally of the French levies under Gambetta's leadership in 1871. For Kitchener's army, when Great Britain set herself to create out of nothing but the valor and willingness of the people a buckler to stem the German flood, the German chiefs expressed a contemptuous and pitying scorn; while they did not give even this measure of regard to the Dominions' contingents when they rushed overseas to take their part in the defence of civilization. These they regarded as mere mobs of untrained militia men, unkempt, undisciplined and without competent leaders, who would be scattered, like leaves before the tempest, by a mere handful of drilled and well-bullied German soldiers. At that time no German mind could have conceived the possibility of such an impossible fact as that within two years it would be a fixed rule of the German army that Canadian troops in the front line trenches must always be faced, across No

Man's Land, by Prussian Guards or Bavarian shock troops.

Nor was the low opinion of the military worth of these volunteer armies confined to arrogant Germans; there were doubters a-plenty at home. Thus a Canadian public man held forth despairingly to me at that time upon the hopelessness of opposing to the highly-trained German armies these hastily organized battalions of men summoned from civil occupations. For one thing was it not a fact, confirmed by all military experience and accepted as veritable holy writ, that an officer, capable of commanding men, could not be made in less than seven years? Unless the French, who were a military nation, had a sufficient surplusage of officers partly to equip the British armies it would be nothing but slaughter to pit these untrained hordes against the Prussian hordes. Nor was this Jeremiah alone in his gloom!

One can recall that there was a certain

nervous trepidation among Canadians when, in the early months of 1915, it became known that the Canadian troops were in the front line and likely at any moment to be put to the test of actual fighting. The men of this first division were separated from their civilian pursuits by barely half a year of time; they were, by all the standards of European war as to training, mere militia. The test came in April, 1915, when the Germans under a rolling barrage of poison gas —a new and terrifying weapon of war— sought to break through the allied front in the Ypres salient at a point where it was held partly by French African troops and partly by the new levies from Canada. The story need not be re-told to Canadians. The gas terror broke the nerve for the moment of the African troops, and they fled in panic; the Canadians plugged the line and held it against all odds until reinforcements came up and the danger was past. It was said at the time that the reason why the Ca-

nadians held on was that they did not know enough about the rules of the war game to realize that they would be justified under the conditions in falling back. Of all the myriad emotions that filled the hearts of the Canadians during those days of sheer stark horror fear was the most absent. An officer, now of high rank, who talked with me in France about the battle of Ypres said that the first solid fact that emerged from the confusion of the surprise attack was the instant resolution by Canadians of all ranks to stand their ground whatever might betide. Non-combatants hurried to their officers to ask what they could do to help. "From that moment," said the officer, "I had no doubts whatever about the Canadian army; I knew that not potentially but actually they were troops of the first rank."

In the War Memorials paintings shown in London in December—to be housed later in Ottawa in some fitting setting—there was a picture which, despite its cubist freakish-

ness, put on canvas, for all men to see, the soul of Canada at war. Everything about the picture was wrong except its symbolism which was compelling in its truth. The canvas, shrieking with its high hues, was filled with Turcos in panic flight crowding one another in their terror, while over them billowed the yellow poison pall of death; but in the midst of the maelstrom the roaring Canadian guns stood, immovable and unyielding, served by gunners who rose superior alike to the physical terrors of the battle and the moral contagion of fear. The foundations of the world were rocking but the guns stood firm!

Ypres, indeed, revealed the basic quality upon which the achievements of the Canadians in the field rested—that fortitude, moral and physical, which in the day of battle and the hour of trial triumphed over every human weakness and made them the implacable and irresistible vindicators of divine justice. In the early summer of 1918

when there was imminent danger of the whole western front being crushed under the weight of the German advance, Sir Arthur Currie, the commander of the Canadian corps, in a speech at a Canadian dinner in London, made a remark which shocked and thrilled his hearers. He said he was the proudest man in the world because he commanded the Canadian corps; and the saddest because it was doomed to die. Thus he gave notice that, if the line were overwhelmed, the Canadians would die fighting. That was the darkest hour that comes before the dawn. No such glorious but tragic fate awaited the Canadians. The future held for them not the guerdon of inexpugnable heroism in disaster but the bright badge of victory. When they struck camp and unfurled their banners for the new campaign they marched not to Thermopylae but to Waterloo.

But much more than the capacity to conquer in the actual clash of the battlefield

went to the making of the victorious Canadian army. These civilians, called from the bench, the office, the farm and the forest showed an aptitude for war—exemplified also in varying degrees by all the democratic armies—that must have seemed uncanny to the German High Command, hopelessly committed by training and inclination to the view that great and conquering armies could only be created in nations as the result of precedent and long-continuing conditions: among them the constant familiarizing of the popular mind with the idea of war as a weapon of national policy, the universal training of men of military age, the careful cultivation of an officer class, the maintenance of a general staff of highly equipped experts and strategists who devoted their lives to the art of war. Considering their environment and viewpoint it was inevitable that they should regard it as simply preposterous that a civilian army officered and commanded by men of their

own type and class—farmers, artisans, clerks, bankers, lawyers, doctors, engineers, journalists, real estate agents—should be able to dispute the field with the disciplined legions of Germany. They could not realize what this war has established beyond all question, that the general principles upon which war is waged are simple and easily grasped.

War is a proposition to apply to a very definite and distinguishable object, all available power. It thus becomes in its essence a huge business problem, fundamentally one of engineering and organization. It was speedily demonstrated in the war that the qualities which make for success in civilian life in almost every field of endeavor are also the qualities which are necessary for successful leadership in war. The civilian mind with its initiative, its readiness to improvise means to an end, its disregard for precedent as such, its willingness to subordinate venerable sacred theories

to modern hard facts, did not suffer in the clash with the stereotyped military mind despite its larger equipment of technical knowledge. All the democratic armies were fertile in inventions and expedients, which were gradually incorporated in the practice of the armies to their great good. A lengthy article—or a book—could be filled with a record of Canadian contributions to the art of war—many of them rapid improvisations when issues turned on minutes. One hears much about them as he goes about in France—and not always from Canadians either.

Thus I was much entertained at Arras by a British officer of artillery who told me how one of his fellow-officers, a young Canadian, had pitted his profound knowledge of artillery fire, which he brought from an insurance office in Winnipeg, against the inherited and assembled wisdom of the higher-ups to their ultimate conversion after an actual test had vindicated his

theory. I shall not here recount how the Canadian soldiers at Ypres were supplied with ready-made gas masks upon the occasion of the first gas attack though it will doubtless be duly recorded in some grave history of the war. The trench raid, which came to be one of the constant factors of the war, was a Canadian invention. It was a Canadian doctor, transferred from civil practice to the front, who first showed the way to cope with trench feet, a war disease which at one time threatened to destroy the British army. The Canadian army led the way in the skilful application of machine-gun power to the necessities of attack and defence; and its system of massing the machine-guns in units instead of distributing them through companies, with their accompanying employment for barrages and indirect fire, would have been extended to the whole army if the war had continued. These are noted only as illustrations; the whole question of Canadian resourcefulness

in the field, with its possibilities of infinite interest, cannot be dealt with here.

One lesson of this war is thus of vast significance to Canada and to all democracies. It is in brief that a country of free men, engaged and proficient in the countless occupations of civil life, is always potentially formidable in war. When we build our country for peace we build it for war, too, if the need arises. Our sure defence is not the soldier in his uniform but the patriot citizen in his plain civilian attire. The vindication of this profound truth has been upon a scale of such magnitude that it is difficult to think that ever again in the history of the human race any aspiring kaiser or Napoleon—white or yellow—will dream that he can, by enslaving his own people, provide himself with a weapon with which to conquer the world.

CHAPTER VII

COMPENSATIONS

I RODE out to the Canadian battlefields from a city where for seven weeks there had been going on a determined, though partly hidden, tug-of-war between conflicting ambitions, some of them far from high-minded; and, after my pilgrimage over the grounds where men by the hundreds of thousands died for an idea, which many of them only vaguely realized though they felt its influence in their hearts, I returned to the same atmosphere of controversy where the keenest discussions turned upon the degree of the reward that should be allotted to this or that country for the services of the men who had made for themselves the utter and complete sacrifice. The contrast could not but suggest reflections upon the relative

contributions to the future security of the world—which was supposed to be their common object—of the soldiers who won the war and the statesmen who were building a peace upon their achievements. There was some satisfaction in recalling that the Prime Minister of Canada was reported to have said, at a certain meeting, that not a single Canadian soldier had died in order that any country might add a mile of land to its territory.

In one of his addresses to the Plenary Conference President Wilson made a striking reference to the United States soldiers. "As I go about the streets here," he said, "I see everywhere the American uniform. Those men came into the war after we had uttered our purpose. They came as crusaders, not merely to win a war but to win a cause." This language applies still more aptly to the soldiers of Canada. No participant in the war has so clear a record of disinterestedness as Canada. The United

States came in late after repeated and deliberate attacks upon its national honor really left no alternative to a proud nation; but Canada, in keeping with a deep and true instinct, drew her sword at the first blast of the war trumpet. There was no calculation about Canada's entrance into the war; nor was there ambition for territory or trade or glory. There was an intuitive recognition that this was Armageddon; and that if the powers of hell were not to overturn the world there would be need of us.

There is much idle discussion as to who won the war. The answer is that it was won by the allies; and that the help of every one of them was essential to the final result. During the war we were told, by little Canadians and would-be-shirkers, that in a conflict of such range and violence the contribution of Canada, however great it might be in relation to the country's resources, could not be a deciding factor; and that, therefore, our canny course was to turn the

war to our advantage by supplying goods and war materials to the allies at war prices. That counsel of infamy was spurned by a generous people, and Canada made her sacrifice of life and treasure to the last ounce of her power. The war is over and won, and the cost is known—a huge debt that will long burden us, a great army of maimed men and sixty thousand Canadian graves in France and Flanders. Was the sacrifice worth while? Are there compensations for our grief and loss? There is an answer to these questions from the battlefields and it is one of consolation.

It would be ludicrous to say that Canada won the war; but the view that if Canada had kept out or had limited her contribution to a mere nominal participation the war would not have been won, can be held with a clear mind by every Canadian. The war was almost lost many times; it was saved on occasions by the narrowest of margins, both as to time and force. It was saved by

the defence of Liege by the Belgians; by the miraculous rally of the allied forces at the Marne; by the holding of the line by the British in the first battle of Ypres; by the repeating of this achievement at the second battle of Ypres by the Canadians; by the glorious resistance by the French at Verdun; by the tenacity with which the bent line was held a year ago; and by that marvelous rally of all the allied powers, in which Canada joined, after the narrow escape from disaster last year, which supplied as though from inexhaustible reservoirs the resources in men and material that crushed the Germans in the summer offensive. Canada has the compensation of knowing that the first object of her war contribution—the infliction of complete and overwhelming defeat upon Kaiserism—was fully realized in part by her exertions.

But the soldiers—not only of Canada but of all the democratic countries—were inspired by something more than a deter-

mination to defeat and punish the Germans. They all had in some measure the feeling that they were engaged in a crusade for the making of a better world in which wars of aggression should cease. They fought, many of them consciously, for a peace which should endure because it would rest upon justice and fraternity. It rests with the statesmen of Paris to keep faith with the aspiration which turned millions of peace-loving men into militant crusaders. If they succeed only in patching up the old order under a pretentious false front, it will be only too true that much of the sacrifice will have been in vain. But though the conditions in Paris are far from cheerful, it is still possible to hope for a peace that will achieve the immediate object of the war—the just punishment of Germany and her allies; and will have in it, as well, the healing qualities that will safeguard the world against the repetition of these horrors. The responsibility that rests upon the world's elder

statesmen, in session in Paris, is immeasurable; and pitiful will be their place in history if, in the judgment of posterity, they turn to base uses the high devotion that strewed the battlefields of Europe with the bones of the generous youth of their countries.

The national compensations to Canada for her participation in the war would not in themselves justify the sacrifices; but they are a substantial reinforcement to the considerations that supply the actual justifications. We have won a new status among the nations of the world; which is the outward sign of that strong national spirit, evoked by the war, which is to-day vitalizing our common life in all its manifestations—political, commercial, intellectual, spiritual. It is something, too, to have learned in the sternest of tests, that we have been building our nationhood on sound lines; that our conception of a democratic people, with equality of opportunity and

status, endures while autocracy, based upon the subjection of man, has crumbled in the fierce fires of war. We know now that everything that makes the normal and happy citizen in peace—good schools in youth, just living conditions, opportunities for advancement to honest work, wise laws, the cultivation of the spiritual life—makes also the unconquerable soldier when he is called upon to defend his home. Canada derives from the war the profound satisfaction that she gave essential help in protecting the world from a political and spiritual reaction that would have set the clocks of human progress back a thousand years; the hope, still confident, that she has helped to usher in a new international order under which democratic institutions can have a peaceful and fruitful evolution to better things for all; and a knowledge of her own capacities and possibilities which gives her confidence to go forward to a great career amongst the nations of the world.

The financial burdens of the war, heavy though they be, need give us little concern. They can be borne—or better still, largely removed—if Canadians in grappling with this problem, show, in any degree, the qualities of patriotism, unity and sacrifice which gave so sharp an edge to their war effort. We all helped in the war but the actual fighting was done by the men who could fight. We shall all help to carry the war debt but most of the paying will have to be done by those who can pay. The war debt may be no calamity whatever if we are driven by necessity to juster methods of taxation, greater co-ordination of national energies and wise development of the country's resources.

The hard question is where the recompense is for the men who will never come back—who rest in the countless cemeteries which dot the battlefields of France. The answer—if answer there be—must be given by fighting men themselves who counted in

advance the cost and accepted the price with proud humility; let them speak! Julian Grenfell, before going into battle to his death, put the case of the young man to whom duty calls in two ever memorable lines:

"He is dead who will not fight,
And who dies fighting has increase."

The passion of man for his country which makes death in her defence a high honor burns in Vernede's "Petition"—a prayer that was granted:

"Grant thou one thing more;
That now when envious foes would spoil thy splendor,
Unversed in arms, a dreamer such as I
May in they ranks be deemed not all unworthy
England, for thee to die."

It must be a deep instinct, not to be judged by finite tests, that sent the young men to battle with joyous hearts and shining faces. "Now God be thanked that has matched us with His hour!" cried Rupert Brooke, now

asleep in Scyros in the far Aegean seas. And the stoicism with which the young soldier foresaw death on the battlefield was never expressed in finer terms than by the British officer in the letter which he wrote to his parents the night before his death:

"It is impossible to fear death out here when one is no longer an individual but a member of a regiment and an army. I have been looking at the stars and thinking what an immense distance they are away. What an insignificant thing the loss of, say, 40 years of life is compared with them! It seems hardly worth talking about!"

Here are four voices, all now from the shades! Do they not, taken together, tell us something of the high exaltation with which the young hero makes his sacrifice. He welcomes the hour that makes his arms his country's shield, scorning the recreant who shuns the test; and measuring time by eternity he renounces life as a garment to be laid aside. If the poet and the seer can

speak for them, the lost do not ask us for pity or for hopeless grief:

"They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun in the morning
We will remember them."

For those who mourn for the unreturning brave there are secret springs of consolation! The ending of the full-lived life is not tragic; the symbol of poignant grief is the broken column that bespeaks the day that ended in the morning. But for those who die for their country there is not this sense of irremediable loss, this feeling of the unlived life, the unfulfilled dream. There is an instinct deep-hidden in human life which tells the mourner that for the man who falls upon the field of honor his life has come full circle whatever the tale of his years; and that somewhere in the divine scheme of things there is compensation for the lost experiences and achievements.

If the dead gave their lives without bitterness and the living are consoled Canada, the common mother of both, is richer for all time for their sacrifice. In the life of the race a single generation passes like a heart-beat; but the chosen few from this generation, whose names are in the lists of the lost, are secure in their fame and in their power. They have set for all time for Canada the standards of service and of sacrifice; their example will, now and forever, sweeten our civic life and if the occasion calls will nerve the youth of Canada to emulate their deeds on the stricken field. A thousand years from now Canadian youths will read the story of their deeds with hearts uplifted and with kindling eyes. Safe in such an immortality what matters it that they sleep far from Canada upon the battlefields of France!

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